7: Thompson--372 J-4 (no date) 1937 Laotians
116, 769, 771, 775, 779

"Along with the first migrations from the North and West into Laos filtered the Vedic precepts and the laws of Manu. From 900 to 700 B.C. the more militant dogmas of Brahmanism began to appear, at the same time as the ancestral cult and innumerable auxiliary superstitions. About the thirteenth century Buddhism began to appear by different routes, but it is the Ceylonese variety, albeit profoundly modified, which has the largest number of Laotian followers. Chiefly because it rejects study and examination, this doctrine permits many superstitions to live side by side with it, embedded at varying depths in the popular consciousness. The kind of Buddhism practised by the Laotians and some Khas is almost entirely excempt from philosophic speculation. Bonzes recite prayers incomprehensible to themselves and to the people, but they must mark every social event. These ceremonies, a reverential attitude towards sacred places, a dash of animism, the ancestral cult, and a belief in Kharma, make up official Laotian religion. Some of this has been absorbed by the Yaos and Lus, Khas and Meos, each of whom has added their own assortment of superstitions. Laotian superstitions, too, are myriad. They attribute all evils to spirits--none other than their ancestors, who take delight in returning to earth expressly to torment their relatives. Hence the great power of sorcerers, who, incidentally, are rent by the greatest professional jealousy. All of this, with a smattering of Christian converts, form an ill-defined, uneasy pantheism, quite congenial to the Laotian soul."

10: d'Orleans--314 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 753, 771, 787, 828

"The great development of the Buddhist creed does not prevent superstitions of another order from being prevalent among the multitude, superstitions the trace of which is easily followed at the great festivals that always appertain to ancient traditions or to the dread of evil spirits. Diseases are regarded in the light of persons, and when the cholera made its appearance here last year, one of the mandarins went round the town at the head of a squad of soldiers who executed discharges of musketry at the gates to drive away the enemy. But the native chief was not rewarded for his zeal, as two days after, as the story goes, the cholera appeared to him in a dream and reproached him for trying to drive it away, saying that in coming to Luang Prabang it was simply doing its duty. As a punishment for his conduct, the cholera announced to him his approaching death, and when the mandarin woke up he was so terrified by the dream that he fell ill and died three days afterwards."

10: d'Orleans--314 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 771, 821

"In addition to the respect felt for spirits, it would seem as if the worship of nature and its forces is still preserved, for honour is paid to the moon, the women going about the streets shouting at each change of quarter. Guns and salvoes are also fired during the eclipses, at which periods the people say that 'the moon is eaten up,' without seeking for any other explanation of the phenomenon."

10: d'Orleans--316-319 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 101, 173, 197, 771, 563 Ethnic subgroups

"The Meos live upon the eastern frontier of the kingdom, close to the Pouons plateau. I never met any in the town, but I had an opportunity of [pages 317 and 318 contain illustration] [319] conversing with one who was employed by M. Counillon, the French consul. He was a man of small stature, but well proportioned, with very pale complexion and regular features, and he told me that the Meos originally came from China and could make themselves understood by the caravan-men from the Yunnam. I gathered from his expressions that the Meos dialect is very like that of Van Bou, the word Meos, being rather the Laos designation, while they call themselves Mongs. I do not know whether this name has any connection with that of the ancient empire of the Mongs and the Mons of Burmah, but, according to the man with whom I conversed, the tribes to which he belongs have no religious creeds, though there is a word in his language which denotes the Deity."

23: Franck--334 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 211, 609, 771 Ethnic subgroup

"In contrast to China, the only visible evidences of religious belief in these wilder parts of Luang Prabang kingdom are bamboo arrows and bits of woven wicker squares and the like, beside the trail here and there. These, the prince told me, were warnings, either that a trap of arrows had been set for wild animals somewhere on the path leading off into the brousse, or that a Kha village was engaged in formalities to which strangers were not invited. Docile as they are, the Kha have been known to kill even Frenchmen who have overlooked or persisted in disobeying these warnings. Hence little is known of the religion of this primitive tribe, except that it acknowledges innumerable genii, good and bad, and that there are many things the visitor must not do, many things taboo not only for the Kha themselves but for any one who enters their villages, because to do them would be to stir up the evil spirits to wreak vengeance on the villagers themselves."

23: Franck--343-344 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 771, 793

"The smallest village has a few Buddhist priests, the support of whom by giving them food seems to be almost the only religious practice of the lay inhabitants. The younger bonzes [344] make the rounds each morning with their begging-bowls before the sun is high, and now and then a man or woman kneels on the ground as a priest pauses to perform for a moment or two some hocus-pocus in reward for the charity, and then turns abruptly away, as if to imply that the giver has had his money's worth. Begging is not looked upon as in the West, but as something perfectly natural, so that neither giver nor receiver seems to feel he is doing anything out of the ordinary. If I may judge by my two princely companions, all Laosian Buddhists say their prayers before going to bed as religiously as any Christian, nay, as any true Mohammedan. But they were more like people thanking a kindly benefactor with unforced gratitude than like men praying out of dread of a punishing God, and the true Laosians at least showed little if any of the fear of demonology rampant among the super-superstitious Chinese. No doubt nature is so gentle with them that the religion of fear, the dread and consequent attempts at propitiation of innumerable evil forces always waiting to do them harm, does not grow up within them."

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

acknowledge in the street a lady with whom one happens to be on particularly good terms. These things in Laos are fraught with an etiquette which is the legacy of a highly organized society not too far gone in decay.

The charm of Vientiane lies in the life and the customs of the people. Unless one is an amateur of pagoda architecture there is little else to be seen. The Laotians have preferred to work in wood, rather than stone, and their art, confined chiefly to the decoration by religious artists of the doors, pillars and interiors of pagodas, quickly perishes in such a climate.

Outside the town there is a great, grey, half-decayed *stupa*, built as a tomb for a hair of the Buddha. It is surrounded by a cloister, containing perhaps a thousand Buddha images; a collection of which the people of Vientiane are very proud. But even here, where the religion is practised in its purest form, there is a little degeneration, a little backsliding from the lofty philosophic conception; and the taint of magic practices shows itself. Selecting one of the numerous images as a personal tutelary divinity, the devotee subjects it to a kind of bribery similar to that sometimes practised in Southern Europe with images of the saints. In this case the image's chief function is healing, and when the sufferer recovers from any complaint he hastens to the pagoda to apply gold-leaf to the part of the Buddha corresponding to that where he has felt the pain in his own body. I was interested to deduce from this practice that the people of Vientiane are much plagued by headaches – perhaps those which accompany malaria.

Standing in a corner of the sanctuary was an ancient ithyphallic statue, an old Hindu divinity, no doubt, which had been worn smooth in the appropriate parts by the feminine adoration of a thousand years. I was told that the women of the French colony who wish for a child frequently emulate their husbands' pose of Laos-ization by coming here secretly to pay their respects. I wondered whether this clandestine tribute might not be extended

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
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000 eventually to the Buddhas to solicit their curative powers; and if so what we should learn from it about the prevalence of disease among Europeans.

217 The museum of Vientiane, which I visited in the hope of learning
532 something of the living art of the country, has also little more to
771 show than a collection of Buddhas. There is a tranquillity, a lack of compulsion in the Hinayanist Buddhism of Cambodia and Laos — so different from the neurotic deformation practised by the later Khmer kings — which is not propitious to the development of religious art. There was no violence or drama in the life of Buddha comparable to that of Christ, and the Indian Epics have been eschewed in Laos as improperly secular. It has been enough to carve Buddhas, and more Buddhas *ad infinitum*, seeking perhaps to multiply in this way the magic virtues which each image contains. The curator takes you round, explaining the characteristic postures — there are seven or eight — all of which can be appreciated in five minutes. After that there are minute differences of physique and physiognomy to be noted that reflect the influences of India, of Java, of Thibet or of Ceylon. That is all.

177 By the time the museums turn to the art of the people, the
532 grotesque animals in bamboo, the carved movable figures which
782 are obscene to European eyes — all of which become a pagan burnt-offering at the end of each *boun*[1] — it will be too late. The microphone is an infallible sign of what is to come. Nothing of this kind will survive the era of materialism, under whatever form it arrives.

253 These are the sights of Vientiane, but in addition there is a
825 spectacle which is popular with Europeans, who, remote, isolated, and living under difficulties, tend to shut themselves up within the protective social rituals of people in exile.

This spectacle is the slaughterhouse at work. I do not know whether or not it is illegal in Laotian law to kill animals, but certainly it is thought shameful, and the killing for Europeans is done at the dead of night on the outskirts of the town. The

[1] [Laotian religious festival. -- Analyst] 254

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
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241 sufficient for his requirements. If there are six members of the
461 family, six standard, equal sized portions of land will be cultivated.
511 If a child is born into the family another piece of land is cleared and
792 worked. When a member of the family dies, whether it be a baby or the grandfather, cultivation of his portion will be stopped. Just enough is produced for the family to eat and to provide a small surplus sold in the market – *with the bonze's approval* – to buy occasional strict necessities, like a silk shawl and a bicycle for the
735 daughter. There is no social insurance and there are no poor. The
556 old and the sick are supported by the young, or, where they are
792 left without able-bodied providers, by the community, and the
771 bonzes give instructions for the necessary land to be placed under cultivation for them. The accumulation of wealth which is not to be used for definite, approved purposes, causes a man to lose prestige among his neighbours, just, as in the West, the process is reversed. The main difference, it seems, between Buddhism in Indo-China, and Christianity – apart from any question as to their relative merits – is that, whether we admire it or not, the former is largely put into practice.

It is a stimulating reflection that the Western millionaire, obsessed for the sake of social distinction with the amassing of enormous possessions – little of which he can personally consume – would attain the same ends of personal celebrity under a Laotian Buddhistic order of things by his priestly austerities – by embracing the most abject and prestige-conferring form of poverty.

181 For this reason perhaps the local Evangelist missionary and his
771 wife have made no converts. Like all who have lived among the
785 Laotians they are charmed with them – although, of course,
797 disappointed at their blindness. They also deplore their immorality.

In the matter of converts the Evangelists have been no more unsuccessful than their Portuguese, Spanish and French forerunners. The Laotians having little capacity for abstractions, either in their

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8
Miao AE5

language or religion, cannot follow the subtlety of Western religious concepts. They have a passion for taking things *au pied de la lettre*. Being told that the basic commandment of Christianity as well as Buddhism is 'thou shalt not kill', they cannot swallow such reservations as capital punishment and 'the just war'; while casuistry repels them. Moreover, a bonze, the spiritual leader of the country people among whom he lives and works, occupies by virtue of his rigorous fulfilment of the principles of his religion, a position in their esteem accorded in the West, say, to a boxing champion. The Laotians have come to associate the prestige of sanctity with certain abstinences and uncomfortable practices. The bonze gives an example of utter renunciation which is awe-inspiring by comparison with the minor self-abnegations of the villagers. The Laotians, therefore, although tolerant in the extreme, are not impressed by the worth of a would-be spiritual leader who presents himself to them loaded with material possessions. And this negative attitude deepens into a certain aversion if, as usually happens, the holy men of the West spend most of their time hunting in a country where animals must be allowed to die of old age. I fear that where the austere Dominicans, and the Jesuits failed, there is little hope for the Evangelists.

However, the missionary was far from despondent. There were Meos in the mountains not far from Vientiane, and just as in the plateaux of Viet-Nam the Moïs had not rejected the Gospel, so here the primitive peoples of the mountains seemed promising material for evangelization. There would be no risk of jeopardizing conversion by hunting, among such hearty amateurs of open-air sports as the Meos, and if the missionary had more of this world's goods than they – well, that was a sure sign that his *ai* (or spirit), was stronger, and it would be a good thing to imitate him. Before the Meos could trouble themselves with renunciatory religions they would have to create a comfortable and abundant civilization for themselves. There was no chance of becoming sated with prosperity at the top of their mountains.

565 The common people, kind and carefree in character, roamed
175* over the country in all directions as easy-going masters, leaving
/462/ household tasks to the women and the work of the fields to dependents of an inferior race or to slaves. They were excellent boatmen and traders rather than farmers, so that they liked to perform the function of peddlers and served as a link between the multiple /55/ varieties of mankind which inhabited Lan-Xang.

567 Slavery existed--slaves could be obtained through capture, as
175* the result of debt or through trade--and brought high profits to those
563 who engaged in this traffic. In the region of Muong-Swa there was also a kind of serfdom which was applied to certain Kha tribes placed under the patronage of the king, the princes or the chief representatives of the nobility.

565 But if we consider the gentle and happy temperament of this
175* people whose good humor made up for everything, we are justified in believing that the relations between the various social levels must have been free of any harshness.

191 They spoke a dialect derived from the language which was imported into the basin of the Ménam by Rama Khamheng at the end of the thirteenth century and which was itself derived from the
771 graphs of India (1). They practiced orthodox Buddhism together
793
554

1. Cf. Mission Pavie, op. cit. /Études diverses, Vol. II, "Recherches sur l'Histoire du Cambodge du Laos et du Siam"/ Inscription of Sukhothaï translated by Father Schmitt, p. 192: "It was in (1287 A. D.) that the king Rama-Khameng summoned a teacher who created Thaï writing."

with the cult of the "Phi" or Genii which represented for them the beneficent or maleficent forces of Nature. The bonzes were of comparatively pure morals amidst these peoples for whom enjoyment and pleasure were, when /56/ all is considered, the true gods. Although they were fairly ignorant and recited their prayers in Pali
/782/ without understanding them, they did not lack a certain air of nobility. They also enjoyed a high regard and had as much favor as they could desire. The bonzeries[1] which were built near the pagodas were at once places of inviolable asylum, schools frequented by all the children of the village, and workshops where trades could be learned.

/[1] Buddhist Monasteries--Analyst./

pious king who justified the bonzes' prophecies by his deeds. He 643*
built a magnificent pagoda to the memory of his father, the
Wat-Visoun (2), the materials for which were requisitioned from 346
175*

2. The edifice which bears this name dates from the time of the king Zakarine (1898). The enormous "stupa" next to it, which covered rich treasures which have only recently come to light, is now in the process of being restored.

the vassals of the northern provinces. Legend has it that the raft carrying the columns provided by the king of Tran-Ninh sank /539/
downstream from Pak-Vet, and the inhabitants of the region still say today that they can be seen at certain times of the year beneath the waters of the Nam-Khane.

Edict against the cult of the "Phis." The king's great piety 771
and his mystical attachment to the /73/ dogmas of orthodix 175*
Buddhism made him intolerant of the Brahmanic practices which 643*
continued to be honored by the peoples of his States. In 1527 he prohibited the cult of the Genii and decreed that all the temples erected to the "Phis" should be demolished. A pagoda called "Sisouvannathevalok" (1) was built on the very site of the sanctuary /778/

1. This pagoda was destroyed by a tornado in 1883. The king at that time, His Majesty Sisavang-Vong, had it rebuilt in 1905 on the original foundations.

of the tutelary Genie of the capital. But it was impossible, even for the supreme chief of existences, to drive from the heads of people as fatalistic as his subjects were the innumerable superstitions which they attached to accidents, to diseases and to the phenomena of sky, earth and water. Despite the royal ordinances the cult of the "Phis," together with a belief in sorcerers and witches, persisted and still persists today.

Phothisarath was the first of the kings of Lan-Xang to leave his 663
Xieng-Thong palace and reside at Vientiane for many years. 175*

Thanks to its central location and its comparative nearness to 633
the kingdoms of Ayuthya and Annam, this city had grown extensively as a consequence of the development of trade. The Kmers, who had been in full decline /74/ since the ruin of Angkor by the kings of Ayuthya, no longer had any influence there. The

175* inhabitants and especially the songs and laughter of the beautiful
114 girls bedecked with flowers. . . . It nevertheless follows from his re-
/771 marks that Lan-Xang was then the veritable holy land of Buddhism
792/ and that it possessed the most highly venerated sanctuaries where priests from Siam and Cambodia "came to spend ten or twelve days to study and receive their grades."

439 For a long time now the rich traders of Holland had been sending
175* ships into the waters of the Indian Ocean in search of cloves, /106/ nutmeg, pepper, silk goods, gold dust and porcelain. In 1641 the mother country had made settlements in Java, Sumatra, Borneo, the Celebes and the Moluccas, and its flag was known as far as the seas of China and Japan. Several mercantile establishments had sent out "sub-traders" from Batavia to Siam and to Cambodia. In July 1641 the governor general of Java, Van Diemen, ordered a mission which was operating in Pnom-Penh on behalf of the East India Company to send out a caravan to "the land of gum lac and benzoin." Under the direction of Van Wustof and his assistants William de Gover and Hubert Boudewinsz, the caravan entered the Mekong. The voyage was a long and difficult one, and often dangerous where rapids had to be passed. These men left Phom-Penh on July 20 and reached Vientiane on November 3 after 106 days of effort. They brought a good-sized packet of cloth and cottonstuffs, a casket of emeralds set in rings and small gifts such as brightly colored sampots (?), mirrors which closed like a book, etc... (1).

1. Cf. Cabaton, Le Laos et les Neerlandais au dix-septieme siecle (1913).

A few kilometers out of Vientiane a /107/ messenger from the king came to find out what the foreigners' intentions were and was shown a letter from Van Diemen to the "sovereign of Laos." He was fully satisfied and took them to the outskirts of the city to dwellings which had been prepared for them on the banks of the river. On the following day, November 4, the merchandise and gifts were unloaded. On the 5th the Dutch were received by the king "a quarter of an hour's
/576/ march away from the capital." They knelt down most humbly, their feet bare, striking the ground three times with their foreheads and holding a large candle in each hand, and were welcomed in a tumultuous camp of soldiers, horses and elephants caparisoned with

162
144
197

2. The Khas (2) or descendants of the prehistoric aborigines.

(2) In Laos the word Kha means slave, individual of inferior and scornful condition, or else one who lives as a savage. The name, which was applied by the last invaders of Laos to the races which had preceded them there, has the same meaning as Moï in Annamite, Stieng or Peunong in Cambodian and Orang Oulou in Malay.

They mixed with newcomers to form a large variety of secondary tribes which, despite their common origin, differ from one another in type, language, dialect or idiom, mores, customs, dress, etc.

[771
212]

The Khas have no form of writing, except for the Khouènes and the Khmous who have been partly converted to Buddhism while their [127] fellows have clung to a crude fetishism in which belief in spirits (Phis) prevails.

[641]

A few of these tribes have not yet submitted to our domination and do not pay any taxes.

The principal Kha tribes in Laos are the following:

a) In northern Laos. (The names below should be followed by the word Khas.)

1. PURE KHAS

Khouènes-Khao.	Koussoungs.	Bos.	Kouangs.
Khouènes-Dam.	Bits.	Sapouans.	Saks.
Lemets.	Phèng-Mis.	Kasèngs.	Mouçeus.
Leups.	Sos.	Tiols.	Khmous.
Lawas.	Siengs-Di.	Alous.	
Khos.	Giois.	Ouxas.	
Khouis.	Hock-Roï.	Panas.	

2. KHAS MIXED WITH LAOTIANS, THAIS, LUS AND YOUNS OR IN THE COURSE OF CHANGE

Oks.	Sos.	Phongs.	Phou-Thuongs.
Youngs.	Soués.	Laos-Nîos.	Phou-Oks.
Phou-Phays.	Sèks.	Phou-Thengs.	

197 In résumé, the study of the Thai language and its derivatives is an attractive one. The language is gentle, musical and euphonic, and is easy for us as well as for the other Latin peoples to pronounce.

It is considered to have many analogies with Malay and most of the Polynesian idioms.

Siamese, Youn and Lu have become localized in certain parts of Laos or have been set aside for special uses. Thus Youn, as we have seen, is the sacred language of Laos.

Lao, however, or the Laotian form of the Thai language, is quite widespread.

[146] In fact, outside of Laos this language is still spoken in Yunnan, in Tonkin, in the two Kouangs and, it would seem, as far away as Hainan.

4. RELIGIONS

174 In prehistoric times Laos must have been in the same situation
771 as the other parts of the world, from the moral and religious point of view. [Illustration here.]

In the age of polished stone, as in the bronze age, there were probably great similarities between the Orient and the Occident with respect to tools and weapons, and also with respect to speculative, religious and philosophical ideas.

175 This state of affairs continued for many centuries until the time
771 when, with the first peaceful migrations from the north and northwest, Vedic precepts and a knowledge of the laws of Manou--laws which were moral, social and above all physiological--began to infiltrate the region. Later on, between 900 and 700 B.C., more militant invaders brought in the already age-old dogmas of Brahminism, together with ancestor worship and many superstitions.

Finally, after another period of fifteen to thirteen centuries, Buddhism made its appearance in Indo-China by two different routes, the south and the northwest.

771 These various doctrines were transformed as time passed and underwent additions, diminutions and numerous changes both in form and content. Struggles, invasions and migrations and civil wars profoundly modified races and made their impression on minds, always leaving ineradicable traces on body and spirit.

It is because of these constant upheavals that we note in Laos today a great host of dogmas and practices which range all the way

from pantheism to Christianity, passing through polytheism, anthropomorphism, Brahminism, Buddhism and metempsychosis. 771

To be sure, the most widespread religion and the one which numbers the greatest number of faithful is Ceylon Buddhism in the form of the Hinayâna doctrine, that is to say the form which adheres to the letter of the scriptures without pretending to seek or discover the esoteric meaning of the words of the master Çakya Mouni. 795 779

It is precisely because this doctrine abjures all casuistry, all scholasticism and all free examination that it has allowed the superstitions of Brahminism and still others to coexist alongside it. These latter are still more or less deeply entrenched, depending on the region and on whether the moral influence of the Aryans has been more or less effective and beneficent in uplifting the populace.

Since, in general, the Buddhism of the Laotians and of the Kha tribes which practice it is, by virtue of its very doctrine, exempt from all free [148] examination and from all philosophical speculation, it is a latria cult manifesting itself in ritual recitations. These latter, moreover, are incomprehensible to the faithful and even to the bonzes. To these prayers are added ceremonies and outer marks of deference for sacred places, temples, idols, worship accessories and officiants. [Illustration alongside text here.] 779

Besides this mild form of Buddhism there are still traces--often very deep ones--of Brahminism and ancestor worship, of a kind of polytheism or cult of spirits which are either beneficent genii or terrible demons, of Pythagorism, of metempsychosis, and of a curious anthropo-spiritualist belief which attributes an individual soul to each of the parts of man's body, to his moral faculties, to his food and even to his excrement, as well as to the four elements--earth, air, water and fire.

This latter belief borders closely on metempsychosis, since it also holds that all souls are immortal and subsist throughout a series of successive existences in the form of various incarnations, in the bodies of men or animals, in plants or in minerals.

It cannot be denied that this doctrine is a highly moral one. Since each mutation or incarnation is a reward or a [149] punishment, there can be no doubt but that, in combination with the precepts of sociability, respect for others and gentleness which are contained in Hinayâna Buddhism, it has had great influence on the moral evolution and social conservation of the people of Laos as well as on their moral customs.

779 Buddhism is practiced by the Laotians, the Lus, the Youns and a few Thai tribes as well as by the Khouène and Khimou Khas.

771 The white, black, red and Neua Thais, and also the Phou-Thais, have generally adopted Brahminic ancestor worship. The Lolos, Méos, Lanième Yaos, etc. are also devotees of this cult, although they have somewhat modified it with certain superstitions.

The Khas of the various tribes profess a kind of ill-defined pantheism as well as the cult of genii, spirits of "Phis," which the other races also observe. Christianity, in both the Catholic and Protestant form, has been adopted by people of diverse origin who have gathered in Christian communities or formed scattered groups in the midst of populations with Asiatic beliefs.

Let us now try to define these various cults and to show how they are understood and by whom they are served.

Religion of the Laotians:

779 "The religion of the Laotians," says the Superior Resident, "is Buddhism. But since there were no Brahmins in Laos whose interest was to see the Brahminic Pantheon supreme, Buddha has kept his preponderant place in the pagodas, whereas in Ceylon and Nepal, the last Buddhist centers in the Indies, he has lost this place and been submerged under and confused with the more ancient gods of Brahminic origin.

[192] "Most of the Laotian bonzes are completely ignorant of the
779 dogmas of the religion which they blindly and deafly serve. One does meet highly learned ones, however, who seem to have a fairly clear idea of doctrine. Eternal nature, which has existed for all time and forms the essence of everything, is to be regarded as a bottomless nothingness and an incommensurable void. Sometimes however, through the fatal effect of desire, this void takes on an appearance. Thence comes all evil, and thence arises suffering. All the appearances which we call life, sickness, death, and separation from what we love, what we desire and [150] what we cannot have, are so many misfortunes. Now, desire is at the origin of all these misfortunes. Suppress desire and at the same time suffering is suppressed. The path to be followed is a simple one; destroy all desire; detach yourself from the things of this world, and try to raise yourself step by step to a higher state throughout all the successive lives which you are obliged to live in varied forms and which will be all the more excellent in the degree that all the acts, words and

779 thoughts of your previous life have been good. Thanks to these efforts you will pass successively, in your various incarnations, from the state of man to the state of holy man, then to that of saint and finally to that of Buddha or perfection, from which you will fall back into the mute and calm abyss, the void and eternal rest. Besides the constant effort of the will to raise itself, the good deeds which you accomplish will tend to the same purpose, whether they be deeds of action, of thought, of word or of intention.

"Anyone who, on the other hand, abandons himself to evil actions and makes no effort to raise himself gradually moves away from the state dreamed by Buddha, and his successive reincarnations occur in the opposite direction, descending into the bodies of animals which may be more or less maleficent and despicable.

"The above, however, are speculations to which the Laotian intelligence cannot rise. The Buddhist religion as practiced in Laos demands only a few outer signs of deference towards bonzes and holy places.

• 771 "Besides Buddhism, the Laotians have retained, or transformed into a cult, certain Spirits or Genii whom they call Phis, the in-
776 numerable deities of the Brahminic Pantheon by which Buddhism
782 was accompanied when it was imported into Laos and which have been reduced to a lesser stature.

"All the forces of nature, all that is capable of bringing disorder into life and every movement or phenomenon which the Laotian cannot explain is personified by a particular Genie or Spirit.

"The cult of these Phis may be summed up as follows: it is an interested exchange of gifts or sacrifices by men, in return for the goodwill, neutrality or help of the Phis. Oftentimes, when the Phi is not greatly dreaded, a bargain will be made with him which will be repaid after he has performed his part of the bargain. The cult of the Phis has a widespread following, and they have their lay priests who bear the title of guardians of the Genii.

771 "In addition to the cult of the Phis, which is nothing more nor
821 less than a form of polytheism, the Laotians are subject to rather numerous superstitions.

"Thus if an eclipse of the moon occurs Laotians imagine that a tiger is trying to devour it, and everyone at once begins to take turns banging on gongs, firing shots and using every means to make as much noise as possible so as to frighten off the aforesaid tiger and prevent it from swallowing the nocturnal star.

776 "The Laotians also believe that there are people who are possessed
771 by the demon or who have [151] the evil eye. They call them 'Phi-
791 pop.' When a person or family in a village is so regarded by the other inhabitants, they are forced to move and to go and live in one of the villages composed exclusively of Phi-pop" (1).

(1) Le Laos français, op. cit. [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

The boatmen and folk who dwell along the watercourses also believe in the existence of certain particular beings, as for example the Siren or "Nguoc." The siren, whom some people claim to have seen (?), is said to have the form of a snake with paws and an enormous head surmounted by a red, saw-toothed crest. It is supposed to have seven nostrils in a single nose, and a mouth provided with several rows of teeth. The scales which cover it and the lobes of its tail are said to be able to clash against one another and make a great deal of noise.

791 In times of public calamity, the "Tho-Nguoc" assumes a human voice and announces important events or cataclysms to come.

754 The "Phi-pop," to whom we have referred above, have, according
683 to popular belief, the power of casting spells and causing the death of animals and even persons by means of their incantations, their practices or their glance. The natives say that they can reduce a buffalo hide to the size of a grain of rice and thus make a person swallow it. Once in the stomach the hide is supposed to regain its natural volume and cause the death of the person who has swallowed it by making the stomach burst after intolerable suffering. It goes without saying that the "Phi-pop" who is the cause of the evil can, in return for certain gifts, arrest the suffering and deliver the patient before death overtakes him. A person who believes he has swallowed a buffalo hide falls prey to a kind of madness and commits all sorts of extravagances, to such a point that his neighbors try to get him out of the village and get rid of him, for he has become a "Phi-pop" in his turn. People claim that there is only one way to find out if a man is possessed, and that is to throw him into the water with his feet and hands tied. If he floats he is not possessed, but if [152] the opposite proves to be the case--and this is what invariably happens--then a "Phi-pop" is really present and his disappearance is regarded as a blessing.

as a blessing. 791

One fact worthy of note is that the "Phi-pop"--men, women and even adolescents--are extremely intelligent folk with lively eyes and full of a strong will and energy. They know [Illustration here] a host of recipes and therapeutic formulas which have been handed down to them by their parents. They might be described as bonesetters or people who have medicine as a sideline, and who act on weak minds and nervous temperaments by the power of suggestion. "Phi-pop" women and girls are usually quite pretty. 755 156

One of the methods most widely used to gain the favor of the "Phis" is to play deafening music. 755 533

"It is not at all unusual to hear diabolic and uninterrupted music in a Laotian house for several days and nights running. In this house there is a person who is seriously ill. All the noise is designed to frighten or to assuage the spirit in the sick person's body and to persuade or force it to [153] leave the body of the invalid. The sick person generally succumbs under the waves of this curative but noisy harmony" (1).

(1) Le Laos français, op. cit. [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.] [113]

Religion of the Thais. They have neither pagodas nor bonzes, but practice ancestor worship and have a great veneration for the "Spirits or Genii," to whom they make offerings on all occasions. 771 769

In the first room of the house there stands a bamboo altar. The "Spirits" or "Phis" of dead forbears are supposed to inhabit this altar, which is composed of two different levels, the highest one for the male Phis and the other for the female Phis. At its foot there is an opening covered with an elliptical wooden ornament shaped like a mouth. It is there, on this "ancestors' mouth," that the head of the family places offerings and prayers, especially when a member of the family is sick. In principal an animal is never killed without some scrap of food or a few drops of blood being offered to the ancestors' mouth.

"Spirits, whether genii or demons, are everywhere--in the sky, on earth, in the forests, in the water. They are the object of a widespread cult over which individuals who might be described as 776 793 755

Khas

776 lay priests preside. These lay priests, or rather these servants of the
793 Spirits, correspond to the Guardians of the Genii in the Buddhist
religion. Usually they exercise their ministry only when one of
755 their countrymen falls sick or dies.

"In case of a serious illness the servant of the Spirits goes to the sick person's house, goes to his side and recites a few prayers. Then he takes a bowl of uncooked rice on which he stands an egg with the smallest end upwards. With his right hand the officiant drops a certain number of grains of rice on the point of the egg, performing this operation three times in all. If the same number of grains of rice remain on the point of the egg each time, this means that a "Spirit" has entered the sick person's body.

787 "By means of similar maneuvers, the Spirit is then questioned to find out what he wants to eat. Depending on the answer, a buffalo, an ox or a pig may be killed. The designated animal is slaughtered and then scorched without being skinned so as to destroy the hairs which cover it. The entrails are taken out and carefully washed [154] in running water, then replaced in the animal's body. The victim is taken to the altar of the Spirits, which is located outside the village, and placed with its head towards the altar. Then prayers are said asking the Spirit to cure the sick person. When the ceremony is over the animal is taken back to the village, where it is cut into pieces and divided among all the inhabitants. The invalid rarely gets well.

"There are also sorcerers and witches among the Thais, who are consulted in circumstances of lesser importance.

[775] "The Thais believe in metempsychosis, although their ideas on the subject are not very clear" (1).

(1) Le Laos français, op. cit. [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

771 Religion of the Khas. Among the Khas, even those who practice
782 Buddhism, the only existing religion is a religion of "Phis" which is
776 similar to the Thai belief in "Spirits, Genii and Demons." The outer manifestations of this cult consist of offerings of rice, flowers and fruit, but never include sacrifices of animals. Small shelters which affect the form of an ordinary house are built at the entrance to villages to receive propitiatory offerings destined for the "Phi".

the "Phi."

It is said that each of us has his good and his evil genie which are engaged in a constant struggle, and that we are good or evil according as the one or the other gains the upper hand. This is a kind of symbolism of good and evil, but here the controlling and guiding conscience is replaced by the influences of the moment, the occasion, the circumstances and the milieu.

Each house also has its own "genie", reminiscent of the Roman Lares, to which sacrifices and offerings are made on every possible occasion.

The evil "Phis" are more dreaded and receive a great many more offerings than the good "Phis," with whom no trouble need be taken.

In each village there is a sorcerer to explain the actions of the "Phis" and teach the way to gain their favor. Although consultations with them are not free of charge these sorcerers, who are called Mo-hou-ha, Mo-Phi or Phi-pop depending on the province, are just as [155] [Illustration] [156] [Blank page] [157] highly regarded as the "Guardians of the Genii" of the Buddhist religion and, like them, are exempt from servitude and taxes.

In times of epidemic all responsibility is attributed to the evil "Phis", and in order to make them take flight the men of the villages beat on the roofs of their houses with long bamboo poles until such time as the "Phis" are supposed to have disappeared.

The Khas have retained a belief in metempsychosis which is tinged with certain rather vague superstitions bearing on a future life and some kind of resurrection. But this second existence is not everyone's privilege, and will exist only insofar as one's life has been a good one.

They also believe in the existence of a place of torment where perjurers, murderers, etc. will remain for all eternity. To be sure, they believe in a general way that a new life will begin and that it will be a reward or a punishment for the individual's deeds in his last incarnation. Thus a brave and good man will return as a happy and respected chieftain. Others will be entitled only to an animal existence, the importance of which in the scale of being will be like a personification of their faults and merits. One odd fact is that women always want to return in the guise of a man.

Religion of the Lus. The religion practiced by the Lus is a form of Buddhism which has been mitigated by certain local customs

771 and to which is added the pantheism of the "Phis." Their general
779 doctrine, however, includes a belief in an "element which creates all things" and in a future life, the sanction of their dogmatic taboos and precepts, in a place of eternal beatitude which it is possible to inhabit here on earth and which is, at bottom, nothing else but the annihilation of being in the "Nirvana" of the Buddhists.

Among the Lus, even more so than in China and the Indies, the basis of this mystical and dreamlike religion which is so well suited to their temperament is an idea of the nothingness of things, the uselessness of effort and even of action. It is, in a word, the most complete pessimism and the annihilation of energy and will.

775 Various beliefs. 1. The following is an incantation or prayer
769 for [158] dying persons which gives a good picture of the system of the world and of the idea of metempsychosis:
539

The sky and the earth are growing dark!
Come out, souls, and gain "space"!
The spirits of the parts of the body are joined together and form only one!
Listen to the law of Buddha:
We teach the road which leads to the kingdom of Buddha, the kingdom of the rising sun.
The one soul, the union of the spirits of the body, knows today that birth and death are alike!
What is birth?
Nothingness produces the generative breath.
The breath produces fire.
Fire produces water.
Water produces earth, mother of all beings.
Birth is produced by harmony and perfect equilibrium of the elements.
What is death?
Death is a return to the beginning by the reversal of causes.
Earth masters water.
Water masters fire.
Fire masters air.
Air masters nothingness.
Nothingness always remains nothingness.
Nothingness is infinite.

Tribal Tai

whole match, instead of keeping their legs rigid and remaining on the same line, the opponents turn constantly around a central point and raise each leg in turn, the knee bent. This exercise, in which all four limbs work at once and which requires a sure eye and rapid execution, is surely one of the most graceful in existence when it is performed with the facile ease and supreme elegance of the Lus.

"Lu dancing has that particular character of morbidness which one finds among most Mohammedan peoples and also in Spain. The men (for the men are the ones who dance) imprint on their feet only those movements which are indispensable for making the body pivot and facilitating slow, undulating movements by the hips, torso and arms. The dancers are accompanied by tom-toms and kettledrums, and they sigh out lingering, voluptuous chants which harmonize well with their movements. These are veritable harem dances, or such as dancing girls might perform." (Le Laos français.) [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

We have already seen what the religion of the Lus is like, and need add only that their bonzes are highly respected and that the pagodas are much frequented by the children and young people. Thus the number of scholars is higher among the Lus than among the Laotians. Many women even know how to read and write.

The Lus do not cremate their dead, but bury them, even at a very shallow depth, after wrapping the bodies in a mat or a piece of cloth. The bonzes recite a few prayers over the grave when it has been filled, and in return for this service usually receive an object of some value which belonged to the deceased.

[250] The tombs are not kept up.

The Youns. The natives called Youns are Laotians who have settled on the right bank of the Mekong, in the basin of the Upper Menam and in the territories of Xieng-Hai, Xieng-Khong and Xieng-Sen. There are, however, Youns living in French Laos where they have mixed with the other Laotians. [Illustration alongside text here]

The Youns may be distinguished from their fellow Laotians by the extent to which they are tattooed. Whereas a Laotian will only be tattooed from the bend of the knee to the waist, a Youn will be tattooed from the calf of the leg to the chest. This has caused the inhabitants of the right bank to be baptized "Black Bellies" (Lao-Phoung-Dam), while those of the left bank are called Lao-Phoung-Khao or "White Bellies."

562 rather, to the wife, that she be good and serviceable and that she sweeten the conjugal life.

A great mandarin who has chosen a life's companion, be she the offspring of a family from the common people or not, has raised her to his rank. She is therefore just as respectable, if not more so, as her husband, since the fair sex is, out of courtesy, more highly regarded than the stronger sex in all civilized countries.

We must therefore render the respect to Laotian women which is their due by the same title which makes it the due of Western women. It is necessary:

1. --that at gatherings the women should not sit on the floor while the men are seated in chairs.

2. --that at banquets the women be placed each one between two men;

3. --that the places of honor be reserved for the weaker sex;

4. --that the women be served before the men;

5. --that the man yield his seat to the woman in auditoriums, in vehicles of public conveyance, etc.

In a word, it is necessary that the man respect the woman and that he no longer look upon her as inferior to himself.

* * *

000 To conclude, in my opinion it would be preferable to modify and even to suppress certain of our customs and of our traditional ceremonies provided this modification does not run contrary to Buddhist rules. There would be occasion to regulate, notably, the funeral ceremony in Laos: for example in a funeral procession to prescribe orderly walking and the observance of silence; to prohibit smoking, the chewing of tobacco, and so forth.

771 Sometimes "tradition" and "superstition" are confused. I repeat, all that partakes of the domain of superstition must be banished. The Laotian is subject to a great number of superstitions, of which the following are some examples: /979/

784 It is forbidden, under certain pretexts:

--to have one's hair cut on Wednesday and to wash one's hair on Thursday because it is on these days, it is said, that Buddha had his hair cut and washed;

--to go on all fours in the deep forest, in order not to attract

daughter, Princess Nang Yot Keo. At an indeterminate date which must come between 1340 and 1350, he was given the command of an army destined to reconquer the kingdom of his fathers. According to the Laotian chronicle, the victorious advance of this army enabled Fa Ngoum to declare himself king of Lan Xan. He immediately demanded the submission of all the Thai princes of Mekong. The center of resistance to Fa Ngoum was Phai Nam (spiny bamboos) because of the impenetrable vegetable belt which protected it like veritable ramparts. Fa Ngoum seized it by means of the classical trick of ornamenting missiles with gold and silver, then pretending to retreat and then pouncing on the enemy at the moment when they had scattered to gather the precious metal. In memory of this episode, the town was baptized Vieng Kham which means "circled with gold" and which later became Vientiane, "circled with sandalwood." Fa Ngoum organized his kingdom with force and reigned as a despot. Complaints were made and the king of Cambodia advised him to be moderate. Fa Ngoum then requested that a mission be sent him from Cambodia consisting of religious and lettered men, and of artisans. This mission introduced the orthodox books of Buddhism and a statue of the Buddha (Prabang) which had been presented in the eleventh century to the Khmer sovereign by the king of Ceylon. Prabang thus became the safeguard of the kingdom.

Up until recent years this tradition led one to believe that the introduction of Buddhism into Laos dated from Fa Ngoum. The discovery of a certain number of Buddhist sculptures of Khmer manufacture of the twelfth century A. D., has destroyed this theory (see below: Introduction of Buddhism to Laos).

After a series of wars, Fa Ngoum died in 1373 at the age of fifty-eight. His successor Sam Sen Thai reigned from 1373 to 1416. He kept [16] peace in his kingdom and passed on to his successor a prosperous kingdom, well established and living in peace, and at the same time dreaded by its neighbors.

The fifteenth century saw a succession of sovereigns about whom history has nothing in particular to tell. Let us mention, however, a war with the emperor of Annam. The first part of the sixteenth century passes under the reign of King Phothisarath (1506-1547), a pious Buddhist. One of his most famous actions is the edict against the cult of Phis. Setthathirath came into power in 1548 after a war with the Burmese. His death was followed by a troubled period. The beginning of the seventeenth century is particularly obscure, but in 1637 a great king called Souligna Vongsa (1637-1694) ascended

779 "The prince heir to the throne Mugapakkha remained dumb until 538 he was thirteen years old. He recovers his speech at the moment when his father wants to bury him alive. He then explains his previous silence by showing that an inconsiderate word may be the cause of great torment in future existences for him who has uttered it." And the Sama Jataka:

"Sama who fed his father and mother, who were both blind, dies of a wound inflicted unintentionally by king Kusi who was deer hunting. As Sama is dying, he entrusts his murderer to break the news to his parents, who lament so painfully that Sakkha is moved and brings Sama back to life."

But of all, the most popular is unquestionably the Pha Vet, the Laotian name for the Vessantara Jataka. (Cf. below Boun Pha Vet).

There exists another series of Jatakas which rival the five hundred Jatakas in popularity. It is the Pannasajataka (Ha Sip Xat) or the fifty [101] Jatakas. This very peculiar text is found in [29] all the literature of western Indochina, and was probably composed in Thai country. Versions exist in Burmese, Khmer, Siamese and Laotian. The Laotian rendition has the peculiarity of containing 27 out of 50 tales which are not found in any other version. These 27 stories are entirely original. They are at the moment in the process of being translated.

Finally the five hundred Laotian Jatakas form a convenient framework into which all kinds of stories in the current language have been inserted. Their study will doubtless prove a mine of information on local folklore.

THE PHI

771 We cannot conclude the chapter relating to the religion of Laos
776 without mentioning the cult of the Phi.

In his books "La Participation" and L'Evolution humaine" the late lamented Jean Przyluski distinguished three successive phases of religion which, according to him, are related to an economic and social state.

When man is a collector of food, that is, when he lives from what he can gather or hunt or fish, his religion is vegetalism or totemism. When he becomes a producer, man's religion becomes agrarian, honoring the gods of vegetation, of the earth, the forests, etc., and particularly the protecting genie of the village. Finally, in the period of urban communities, universal gods appear.

While some reservations might be made on this classification, it does nevertheless offer a convenient framework in which we can

include all the local genii one comes across in Indochina, either under the name of Neak Ta in Cambodia, or Phi in Laos, to mention only two countries. The cult of the Phi is still very much alive in Laos, although it has long been contested by the Buddhist clergy and forbidden by an edict of Phothisarath in 1527.

[30] But there are several classes of phi. First of all there are the universal phi, those are the ones which Buddhist tradition has attempted to assimilate for better or worse.

The book of Khun Bolom says precisely that the Phi Fa (Phi of heaven) and the Phi Then are in reality Indra, and the guardians of the four worlds. The Phi Sua Muon are Nang Tholani (Dharani, goddess of the earth) and Nang Mekhala (Manimekhala, deity of the sea). Finally there is the Phi Then Ten (Visvakarman, the builder).

The local protecting genii of the kingdom of Lan Xan are the fifteen Nagaraja (Praya Nak) who are the genii of water, living in the river rapids, at the confluence of rivers, on the rocks on the river banks or in caves. Their natural form is that of a serpent, but they can also take on human form.

Then follow the familiar genii, the wandering phi (Phi Pho), and the phi of dwellings (Phi Heuan). The Phi Heuan are honored at the time of marriage, and the Laotian code prescribes the indemnities which must be paid to please the Phi. There are also the phi of parents [or relatives--Translator] (Phi Me). These are often confused with the preceding ones. Their cult is celebrated either inside the house, or outside in a small shelter built for this purpose. This little structure is usually built leaning against a tree; sometimes it contains a small statuette or a stone, or even nothing. In that case one finds only a few grains of glutinous rice, and one or two small sticks of incense in a horn made of a banana leaf. This little house is the home of the Phi. He watches the living from the beyond and manifests himself every time a member of the family behaves badly. His intervention is most often known by a sudden and serious illness. One must then try to find out what has displeased the phi. For this one goes to the "sorcerer" and he will indicate [31] the sacrifice which must be made to the phi to appease his anger."

There exist also village phi to whom honor and offerings are due at the time of every ritual or local ceremony, particularly about the seventh month. Coinciding with a sort of pause in the ordinary activity of the Laotian, a pause which is regulated by a change in season, return of the rains and the rise of the Mekong waters, the feasts of the "months of the spirits" are centered around the evocation

May, and Vat Visun to render homage to the protecting genii of the village and chase away the evil spirits. 527

During three days the Laotians do no cooking. Fish, turtles, birds, etc., are bought in the big market and then set free as a sign of penitence and redemption of sins committed either voluntarily or not against living beings during the past year. 782

Possibly there is here a survival of the origin of the cycle of animals. According to Finot, at a very remote period, the custom of curing sick children by letting an animal go free had arisen. When a child was saved in this manner, he was said to have been born from this animal because he owed it life. He was forbidden to kill it, and the year of the child's birth was given the same [65] name as the animal. It is thus that the cycle of twelve years was established. 825 771

In the dry beds of the Mekong and of the Nam Khan, small that made of sand are built. Each one wishes the other a long life, whose number of years will equal the number of grains of sand forming the that, and great prosperity, for ill-luck has fled with the last day of the past year, and the New Year should bring as many riches as there are grains of sand in the that. Often around the principal that, other much smaller ones are erected, their number corresponding to the age of the builder. They express the wish of the one who has built them that he will see many more years added to those he has already lived. Actually these little that around the central mound are a reproduction of Mount Merou surrounded by different worlds (Cf. the symbolism of the That Luang). 527 805

In the pagodas the statues of Buddha are taken down from the altars and placed in little wooden prasat. They are sprinkled with perfumed water which flows in the hang-lin (a kind of gutter of gilded wood whose extremities represent the head of an aquatic monster), for the year now ending must be completely exhausted, and a minute cleansing, both material and spiritual, must leave a strictly clear way for the New Year. In the streets the young girls sprinkle not only the bonzes whom they honor, but all the young men, to compensate for all the minor vexations they have endured from the men during the past year. The high dignitaries are not exempt from these showers of more or less clean water. Sometimes their faces are rubbed with lampblack or mud, when they have the ill luck of meeting a group of young girls. Do we have a survival of the theme of the svayamvara here (free choice of the man by the young girl)? [562]

[66] The day in between, the day before New Year's day, is one of complete rest. All the events which occur during this day will determine